



## **The Steward's Dozen – What Every Steward Should Know**

### **You don't have to be an expert.**

Stewards are always being asked questions. Don't act like you know what you're talking about when you don't as your friends and colleagues will see through it right away. Find out the information you need and get back to them. Call the MFT Business Agents, Mike Leiter or Bonita Jones at 529-9621.

### **Figure out where to turn for answers.**

Your union officers and staff are knowledgeable in contract interpretation and many areas of labor law. Other union activists can be important resources.

### **Knowing how to delegate tasks is your most important skill. Doing it all by yourself won't work.**

Recruiting volunteers is an easily learned skill. Some people do it naturally, others benefit from specific training in recruiting or team-building. You won't be able to do anything on your own as well as you could with the help of others. If you are always frustrated, you will burn out. The more people you get involved, the more you can accomplish.

### **Your job is to empower people.**

Give a man a fish, he'll eat for the day. Teach a man to fish, he'll eat for a lifetime. If all you do is solve other people's problems for them, what are they going to do when you're not there? Help people learn how to solve their own problems.

### **Ask a lot of questions.**

Socrates didn't get to be famous for nothing. The best ideas come from picking a lot of minds and getting people to think about old problems in new ways.

### **Learn how to listen.**

When personnel problems and grievances occur, sometimes just being willing to listen is the most important thing you can do. When you're organizing, you need to know how other people feel and how they view the situation before you can influence them. Ask and listen.

**Never assume the principal knows better than you.**

Most principals have little understanding of contract rights or labor law. Generally, they have experience in other areas. Anything you learn about employees' rights on the job makes you more of an expert in that area than they are. Know your contract.

**Always get back to people.**

If you want your colleagues to have trust in you, be responsible and reliable. Do not promise things you cannot deliver and be sure to follow through on commitments you make.

**Be a responsible employee on the job.**

Not only is this important if you want your colleagues to have respect for you and your opinion, but it keeps you from getting into unnecessary trouble with management.

**Stay informed and active.**

Attend union steward and membership meetings. Read the MFT Educator. Receive and review Get Active emails. Serve on MFT and joint labor/management committees. These are great ways that you can get information to bring back to your building.

**Maintain a sense of humor.**

On one hand, ridicule can be a powerful weapon against an irrational supervisor. On the other hand, do not take yourself too seriously. If you get self-righteous, you won't learn from your mistakes and you will turn people off.

**Keep your eye on the prize.**

There will be frustrations. There will be losses. Sometimes people will get angry with you and sometimes you'll start to wonder if it's all worth it. But, as long as you remember that collective action is the only real way to change things for the better, you'll know that in the long run, helping to keep the union strong is the best thing you can be doing for yourself, your colleagues and your profession.